

AN ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY OF ALUMNI

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

AT ITS SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING,

Held in the Rotunda, on the 4th of July, 1844:

BY FRANKLIN MINOR.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

CHARLOTTESVILLE

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE INTELLIGENCER

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ORATION.

THE anniversary of our national jubilee is come, and the nation's joy seeks expression in civic pomp and military pageantry, in waving banners and martial music, in eloquence and in song. Unnumbered tongues proclaim, to-day, the glad anthems of our gratitude to the heroes whose struggles made us free; and recite, in glowing language, the story of their sufferings and trials, their zeal and fortitude, their victories and reverses, their virtues and their deeds. The nation's heart is tuned to patriotic love, and it needs but the patriot's hand to touch its chords to draw forth strains of celestial music. Fit is the day, and fit our mood to lull the stormy cares of life, and hush the fierce demons of party spirit, while we commune together on all that is purest, noblest, and best in man; and drawing nigh around the altars of our country's love, endeavor to catch a new spark from the flame which burned in the hearts of our forefathers.

Americans have consecrated the birth day of our national independence to themes of unmingled patriotism; and hallowed by the time-honored custom which calls on us once in each revolving year to bury the animosities of political strife, and unite around a common shrine—to enter the temples of liberty, and renew our vows of patriotic devotion—and to commemorate, by appropriate celebrations, the integrity of our statesmen, the courage of our soldiers, and the firmness of our people, during the revolutionary struggle. Easy and delightful would be the task of leading your thoughts through the stirring scenes of that eventful period, so full of all that rouses and charms the heart. I turn reluctantly from that much-trodden path, to the consideration of an humbler and less-glowing theme. I might fan the flame of our national vanity, by high-wrought eulogy on the worth of our ancestors, and overstrained panegyric on the perfection of our systems of self-government; but that vanity is inflamed enough already, and needs no further fanning.—Or, I might paint a picture of our future destiny, and gild it with all the bright colors of prosperity, liberty and happiness; but the future belongs not to man, and its visions are dark, uncertain and unprofitable. I claim your attention to graver subjects—to thoughts on some of the elements of Individual and National Honor—a theme which carries us back to the past for its examples, brings us to the present to behold its blessings, and promises us its rewards in the future. Such a theme cannot be inappropriate to a day which is dedicated to the celebration of noble and illustrious deeds, and the return of which recalls to our minds so many instances of honorable and virtuous conduct.

The indefinite character of the subject will, I fear, involve me in some unavoidable confusion of language, unless I may be allowed, even at the

hazard of philosophical accuracy, to speak of *honor*, both as a kind of applause which we bestow on others, distinguishable from mere glory; and also, as a moral principle operating on ourselves, and impelling us to the practice of virtue; in which latter sense it should, perhaps, be called *the desire of honor*. I shall speak of it in both senses; but to avoid repetition, shall leave the context to explain in which sense the term is used, in each particular case.

The ancients, with a just perception of emblematical propriety, built the temple of honor without an entrance, except through that of virtue. But, alas! virtue itself was to them a hidden mystery! Their philosophers groped their way through the darkness of nature in pursuit of moral truth, until lost in the vague confusion of their own conceptions, they exclaimed in despair—"What is truth?" The pale and sickly lamp of the human intellect shed a ray too feeble to penetrate the thick-ribbed darkness which hung upon the moral world. But the sunbeams of inspiration have now dispelled the gloom of that night, and kindled into blaze the mid-day of knowledge, in which we may read upon the heavens in letters of living light, the lessons of eternal truth.—"Whosoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This great maxim, though often trodden down by the heedless foot of man, though often evaded by the cunning ingenuity of his mind, though often perverted by the wickedness of his heart, has not been, and cannot be, annihilated. The impress of Jehovah is stamped upon it—it is eternal. Time, may bury it beneath the ruins with which he strews his pathway; but, like the fabled bird, it will arise into new life, and with brighter plumage and stronger wing, soar a sublimer flight towards the regions of eternity. Write it upon the arches of the temple of honor, and twine it round the altars of virtue; for without it the one is an idle show, and the other an empty name. We need not the aid of metaphysical subtlety, to draw the line of distinction between Glory and Honor. The former is that mead of applause, which we give to all that is grand, illustrious and imposing in human conduct, without regard to the manner or the consequences of its achievement;—the latter, is the award of approbation, which the love and gratitude of mankind bestow on an eminent display of those virtues which adorn and bless society. Glory dazzles us by its brilliancy—Honor wins us by its purity, Glory strikes our minds with wonder and admiration—Honor touches our hearts with love and esteem. The one soars in the loftiest and dreariest regions of self-love, her wings often dripping with gore, and her feet stained with crimes;—the other walks in the vallies of philanthropy, leaning on the arm of virtue, and showering blessings on the abodes of men. Glory delights in the din of battle, the havoc of war, and the hot incense of man's applause—Honor seeks, in the performance of duty, the approval of a good conscience. Glory is the erratic meteor, which flits athwart the spheres, startling us by its glare, and inspiring us with awe, terror and amazement—Honor is the genial light which beams with serene and steady ray, and gives health, beauty and life to all it shines on. Contemporaneous examples are not wanting, both of ancient and modern times, to illustrate the distinction between Glory and Honor. Cato of Utica, and Julius Cæsar, in rank, in age, in eloquence, in genius were equal, "*sed alia alii.*" The fame of each is immortal—the one living embalmed in our hearts—the other, rivetted on our memories. In Cato, we contemplate with pleasure his pure life,

his stoic temperance, his magnanimous friendship, his stern integrity, and his firm patriotism; while we turn away with loathing from the meanness, the dishonesty, the rapacity, the profligacy and the debauchery of Cæsar. The virtues of Cato cast a reviving lustre over the waning embers of his country's liberty—that liberty expired beneath the vices of Cæsar. We delight to honor the name of Cato—history will not let us forget the glory of Cæsar.

Buonaparte and Washington were both the heroes of a revolution in their country's affairs—in nothing equal, save in the immortality of their fame. Who shall say that the measure of Napoleon's glory is not full? Do we not see him a nameless youth—a subaltern officer—a victorious General—a haughty Emperor—a stern despot, in such quick succession that we scarce note his approach, until he stands before us in gigantic proportions? Like a speck in the heavens, at first scarce seen, presently attracting us by its waving outline and gilded colors—anon growing darker and more threatening—then veiling the sun and shrouding the sky—and at last bursting upon us in all the terror of storm, riving the solid mountains with its lightning, and shaking the firm earth with its thunders. He rises up out of the foamy billows of the French revolution, like some mighty Sea-God sent to lash the wild surges of democratic fury into the calm of despotism. His fame reverberated from shore to shore, in tones louder than the peals of his own artillery, till echo grew weary of the sound, and men every where trembled at his name. He seems a veiled messenger of destiny, scourging his race with death and woe—obliterating the land-marks of nations, overturning hoary dynasties, and establishing ephemeral kingdoms: But lift up the veil, and gaze upon the man, and we shudder at the deformed mass of falsehood, impiety, murder, cruelty, treachery and treason. Love, honor, justice, peace, liberty—all the blessings, and all the virtues, lie bleeding at his feet, trampled in the dust to lift him up to greatness.—Rivers of blood, and hecatombs of slaughtered thousands, are the reeking monuments that mark his course; the wail of the widow and the orphan, the cries of the wounded and the dying are the melancholy music which heralds his march. Look at Marengo and Austerlitz, and twine for his brow, if you will, a chaplet of undying *glory*, but weave into it no emblems of *honor*, lest his crimes wither them, and his garlands fade forever.

Washington, in extent of fame, is the equal of Napoleon; in all that makes fame honorable, a sightless distance high above him. Every virtue claims a share in his noble character, the vices only stand far aloof. Justice and truth, firmness and wisdom, courage and patriotism, benevolence and piety, make up its exact proportions, its graceful lineaments, and its lovely features. The triumphant armies of England could not damp his courage—insuperable difficulties could not shake his resolution—the brightest visions of ambition and power could not tempt him from the path of duty. He lifted the destiny of his country's freedom on his shoulders, and ample was his Atlantean strength to bear the precious burden high above every difficulty, and far beyond every danger. History furnishes us no character at once so illustrious and so pure—so exalted and so unsullied. 'Tis vain to eulogise the name of Washington—a name too grand for song, too sublime for eloquence; we may place it on the highest pinnacle of fame, yet sigh in disappointment for some loftier point to place it on,

The fame of Napoleon, won without virtue, and polluted by crime, is but as dross, compared with that of Washington. It is glory in both cases ; but in the one false, in the other true ; in the one a fit subject for our execration, in the other a noble example for our imitation. The one is mere *glory*, the other genuine *honor*—choose ye between them.

The desire of honor, considered as an active principle of human conduct, enters into all the ramifications of social duty. It is the principle which impels us to the performance of the duties of life, in all its varied relations, making the friend trusty, the citizen correct, the judge upright, the soldier faithful, the statesman incorrupt, woman chaste, and man honest. It is the brightest jewel in the monarch's crown, the fairest flower in the hero's chaplet, a gem of pearly beauty even in the hovels of poverty and despair. How happy a theme for the consideration of young men about to enter on the theatre of life ! When Christopher Columbus sailed from the harbor of Palos, on his first voyage of discovery, amid the prayers and supplications of the multitude assembled on the shore, he embarked upon an unknown and untravelled ocean, but he carried with him the unerring load-stone, faithful to direct his course upon its trackless waves. In all the vicissitudes of calm and storm, of sunshine and darkness, the needle would be still true to its office. How much did its possession diminish the dangers of that daring and perilous voyage ! Happy would it be for frail human nature, if, when we embark on the stormy sea of life, we could secure some such moral guide, some sure index which, when tossed on its billows, should, like the mariner's compass, point us still to the polar star of happiness. Is not this principle of honor, chastened by religion, such a guide ? Will it not infallibly lead us to distinction, contentment and happiness ? Take it then with you, young men, into the world you are about to enter on, and whether the sunshine of prosperity light up your way, or the clouds of adversity lower thick above it, look still to its index, and follow where it points.

The precepts of honor must be looked for in that golden rule before announced—" Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." 'Tis vain to look for them elsewhere ; and vainest of all to seek them in what is popularly called *the code of honor*—that absurd relic of a semi-barbarous age, a code founded neither in wisdom, justice nor religion,—not in wisdom, for it subjects all offences to the same penalty ; not in justice, for it puts the injured at the mercy of the offending party ; not in religion, for it makes man the avenger of his own wrongs, while Heaven has said, " vengeance is mine, I will repay." It deals out the same measure of redress to the grossest outrages and the slightest insults. It grants the same hard terms to abused confidence, betrayed friendship, insulted chastity, and to the most trivial affronts.—It looks with the same eye on the wretch who seduces my daughter, and the stranger who treads on my toe ; and offers me the life of either at the hazard of my own. Unwise as it is in the judgment it pronounces, it is still more unjust in the execution of its sentence, for it gives the wrong-doer every advantage. Instead of weighing justice in an equal balance, poised by the firm hand of wisdom, it leaves the final decision to blind chance, having first, however, ordered the chances to be in favor of guilt, not of innocence. But unwise and unjust as it is, it is still more incompatible with the precepts of religion, for it legalizes deliberate murder, inculcates premeditated revenge, sanctions disobedience to the laws,

and teaches man to break the tenderest and holiest ties of filial, parental and conjugal affection in defence of empty and idle punctilio. It measures the feelings by the worn-out standard of a savage age, which reckoned physical courage, a contemptible instinct of our nature, as strong in the wild-boar and the bull-dog as in man, above moral courage, one of the noblest fruits of education and refinement. The practice of duelling, the legitimate offspring of this code, is wholly inconsistent with every principle of genuine honor. Would that public opinion could be waked up to expel from among us this last relic of feudal barbarity. In this age of refinement, a man should cease to purchase impunity for meanness by a readiness to risk his own life or to take that of another; and society should expel from its bosom, with scorn and indignation, the wretch who insults or injures his fellow-men, instead of fostering and cherishing him, if he can stand the point of a sword or the click of a trigger. There is another kind of spurious honor, which is, if possible, even more baneful and deleterious than this—whereby politicians and editors of political newspapers are allowed to deceive and gull the people in their vocation with impunity, if they can manage to keep clear of the pillory and gallows in their dealings and intercourse with men. These immaculate gentry would fain keep two codes of morality—the one for private and the other for public use: the misfortune is that they are too apt to carry both in their pockets, and have none in their hearts. Strange and preposterous idea, that he who betrays a public trust, can be faithful in a private one, or that he who is false to his country can be true to his friends. Yet do we often hear that such an editor or such a politician is a correct and honorable man, but is not to be trusted in politics. Away with this perverse notion of honor, which has converted the freedom of the Press, that mighty palladium of our rights, into a common sewer of billingsgate, slander and falsehood, and driven honorable *statesmen* from the councils of the nation to make way for knavish and black-guard *politicians*.

Need I dilate on the rewards of honor? We shall find them in the approbation of the wise and good, in the sweet solace of a sound conscience, and in the benignant smiles of approving heaven. It links our names with Hampden, LaFayette and Washington; and, by that chain of immortal coil which circles round the great and good of every age, it binds us to the hearts of millions yet unborn; and when joined to a holy faith, it helps to anchor our hopes on that happy shore where the righteous Abraham reposes in the bosom of his God.

I cannot leave the subject of individual honor without addressing a word to the female part of my audience. The principles of honor must be instilled into the mind in early life, before the weeds and brambles of care and vice choke up its virgin soil, and you my country women, must do the work. Plant it, then, in the hearts of your sons, yea, and of your daughters too, in the spring-time of youth, water it with the soft tears of maternal love, and support it by the fervency of your prayers, and rest assured that you, while you live, and your country, long, long after you are gone, will reap the rich harvest of its blessed fruits.

Nations are but masses of men, united into societies by accidental or natural circumstances; and their conduct, being subject to the influence of the same impulses, motives and passions which control individuals, must be judged by similar rules. To notice all the subjects of national honor, would be an endless task, toilsome to me, and tedious to you;—

permit me to call your attention to some of those which lie most prominent on the surface. A system of wise and just legislation, which has for its object the protection of persons and property—the preservation of liberty—the restraint of licentiousness and disorder—the punishment of crime, and even-handed justice between man and man, cannot fail to reflect the most exalted honor upon national character. Insecurity of personal privileges and the rights of property, is the certain harbinger of oppression, rapine and murder, which sever the bonds of the social compact, and recall the chaotic anarchy of a state of nature. No cause tended more than this to retard the advance of civilization during the middle ages, when might gave right, and the best title was the strongest arm and the longest sword. While the history of that period is replete with instruction on this subject, it fills the mind with gloomy forebodings of the future destiny of man. The human intellect, after culminating in the zenith of its glory and power, seems to sink into a hopeless and interminable night. And do we not tremble at the thought that that night may come again? May there not be successions of day and night in the moral, as in the physical world? May not the sun of civilization be doomed to rise to a certain meridian, and then sink again, and setting, leave the world in darkness? And if so, is it morning, noon, or evening now? Is the course of our generation still upwards, or have we reached the zenith, and must we soon descend? There are signs in the heavens, which portend convulsions in the social system. While legitimacy, in one half of Europe, is tottering before the onward and resistless march of the equality of conditions; despotism in the other half is curbing with iron fetters this rising spirit of the age. The rivals must meet ere long in mighty conflict—tremendous, fearful and terrific will be the strug'e. But when the storm ceases, when its thunders are hushed, its clouds roll away and peace hangs her bow upon the skies, we shall behold again, the star of man's destiny—either rising in the east with renewed lustre, or shorn of its beams and setting in the west. If in that struggle the spirit of despotism triumph, the sable curtains of moral darkness will overshadow the heavens, and man must prepare to sleep another long night of slavery and despair. But if victory light on the banners of equality, a new impulse will be given to the march of civilization, the sunshine of moral improvement will grow brighter and brighter, and Freedom, clapping her wings with joy, will begin a new flight onwards and upwards—ceaseless and eternal.

To preserve that freedom of action which is necessary to give life to energy, and contentment to home, and at the same time to restrain it within such bounds as to prevent disorder and licentiousness, is one of the most difficult problems in legislation. Fancy, in her aerial dreams, may delight to dwell on the Utopian scenes of a state of nature, when man roved the wild forest in the uncontrolled enjoyment of natural rights, with no objects of life but the gratification of his appetites, and no law but his own savage will—but reason teaches us that no such condition of things could exist. Man is formed for society, holds all his righ's, under the social compact, and has never lived without its pale. The king of beasts has an indisputable, natural right to hunt, pursue, overtake and slaughter his prey, regardless of the sufferings of the victim; but man belongs to a higher order of creation, and has lost this brutal right in the blessed bonds of society. What is natural right, but superior power—the right of the strong to prey upon the weak? The chief

object of social organization is to control this natural power by the restraints of law. Yet any restraint upon the powers of the individuals, not necessary to the safety and protection of the whole, is a species of tyranny, making society a curse, and man a slave. Freedom of action when repressed within wholesome bounds is a mighty instrument of mental and moral improvement, and when uncontrolled, the source of most direful evils—thus the power of steam, when chained to our cars gives us the “wings of the morning that we may dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth,” and when it bursts from its shackles, becomes the speedy messenger of destruction and death. While the honor and liberty of the nation require that too much restraint shall not be put on the natural powers of the citizens, its peace and safety demand enough to ensure order and obedience to the laws. Democratic institutions seem to foster in a peculiar manner the spirit of insubordination and licentiousness. It buds in our nurseries, blooms in our schools, and bears its deadly fruits in the bosom of society. It led to the frightful tragedy enacted on that lawn a few years ago, which robbed this institution of one of its brightest ornaments, and sent a young man forth into the world with the brand of Cain stamped on his forehead, and the remorse of hell knawing at his heart. The recent mobs in Philadelphia are another instance of this fell spirit’s work, during which the authority of law was defied, social order yielded to brutal force, the rights of persons and property were violated, and even the sanctity of God’s holy temple invaded. Ages of quiet order cannot wipe out the foul reproach of the few brief hours during which the fury of a mob triumphed over the authority of law. Bright is the honor of that nation whose laws are so ordained in wisdom, and executed in justice, that the natural powers of man which are productive of good, are cherished and developed, while only the evil and vicious ones are restrained and subdued.

The French revolution is another example of the spirit of licentiousness, destroying at one fell swoop every vestige of national honor. It is an event without any parallel in the annals of man’s history. The tornado sweeping over the face of nature, tearing off her robes, and scattering ruin, desolation and death along its path; or the earthquake engulfing cities, shaking the solid earth, levelling the lofty mountains, and filling up the caverns of the mighty deep, are faint emblems of its wild fury. The demons of civil discord were let loose to rend the vitals of society, and the floodgates of hell lifted high to deluge the nation with crime. Not only was all human law abrogated, but Deity itself defied, and a common prostitute, ^{crowned} the Goddess of Reason, usurped the throne of Jehovah. Fearfully and bitterly has France expiated her crimes; and at last, scourged with many woes, and stricken with many wounds, she has resumed her stand among the nations of the earth, happy if her passage through the fiery ordeal has purged away her dross, and prepared her for the enjoyment of rational freedom. Deep is the national disgrace when but a portion of the people rebels against law and order. But when the whole nation becomes a mob, throws off every restraint, and runs riot in the excess of unbridled license, the stain is indellible; like murdered Duncan’s blood upon the Queen’s hand, the “damned spot” will not out.

To remove obstacles from the path of genius, and dispel the clouds which surround it—to nurse it when struggling with adversity, and waft it on amid the gales of prosperity—to burst the fetters which chain it to the

earth, and nerve its wings for lofty flights into the pure empyrean where truth

“Sits,
High-throned above all height”—

to garner up the rich treasures of its discoveries, and pour the effulgence of its light on future ages, are among the noblest and most honorable offices of government. Built on this foundation, national honor stands unshaken, amid all the shocks of time. Misfortune may obscure its radiance, disaster may veil its light, or disgrace may dim its ray in total darkness, yet will men in far distant ages, look back with grateful hearts to pay the tribute of honor to the nation which has been the patron of genius. What remains of Athens and Rome, but the trophies of their genius? Athens, once the seat of learning, the school of the world, the home of freedom and the birth-place of science—Athens is no more.—Time has flapped his wing over her, and her citadel is in ruins, the worshipper of Mahomet has polluted her temples, ignorance sits enthroned in her philosophic halls, and slavery has put its chains upon her children. Where is the mistress of the world? The Coliseum stands, but where is Rome? Where her victories, and her “trebly-hundred triumphs”—her conquering legions—her mighty captains—her vassal nations, and her boundless territories? The foot-step of the savage has defiled her soil—the Goth and the Vandal have clipped the wings of her far-soaring eagles—heathen hordes and Christian armies have stripped her of her glory—

“The Niobe of nations! there she stands
Childless and crownless.”

Athens and Rome would be known to us only as heaps of ruins, like Balbec and Palmyra, had not the genius of their sons immortalized the story of their greatness. Their wealth, their power, their governments, even their languages have passed away, but have not been, and cannot be forgotten—the genius of Thucydides and Tacitus hovers over them still—the fire of Demosthenes and Cicero still kindles the flame of their glory—and the music of Homer and Virgil is still heard amid their crumbling ruins.

We behold in Spain an instance of a nation redeemed from almost total infamy by one brightspot—by a single instance of successful encouragement given to noble enterprise. That nation, from being at one time a first rate power, has sunk into insignificance. Her bowels torn by intestine feuds, and her strength paralysed by angry factions, she lies gasping for breath, while her greedy neighbors are only restrained from dividing her rich inheritance among themselves by the fear of each other.—The haggard ghosts of the victims of the inquisition rise up against her, and, with maimed tongues and tortured limbs demand the penalty of superstition and persecution—and the blood of innocence shed upon the plains of Peru and Mexico cries aloud to heaven against her for vengeance. But Spain, the kingdom of Isabella—that paragon of noble queens—Spain, the patron of Columbus, the discoverer of America, is honored yet, Who can forget that we owe to Spain, debased and disho-

nored as she is, the discovery of the new world? And such a world, so fresh, so beautiful, so rich, so grand—

“ Where
Nature wantons as in her prime, and plays at will
Her virgin tricks.”

No event has conferred greater blessings on the human race, than the discovery of America. The extension of the Roman Empire, preparing the way for the dissemination of the gospel by universal dominion—the art of printing dispelling the clouds of ignorance, and casting the light of knowledge over a benighted world—the invention of gunpowder, entrenching civilization behind impregnable barriers—and the reformation of Luther, bursting the thralldom of the mind, and purging religion from its corruption, alone can be compared with it. The individual honor of this bright deed all belongs to Columbus, the greatest benefactor of mankind. A hero, whose laurels all bloomed in peace, and bore no fruit of evil. Nor eloquence, nor poetry, nor science, nor the sword opened his bright way to glory, yet is he first among the greatest. Undeterred by disappointment, undaunted by difficulties, undismayed by dangers, relying solely on the heaven-born impulses of his own mighty genius, he led the way across the wide wilderness of unfathomed waters, and gave to man a hemisphere. But the national honor is all Spain's. What have not Genoa and Portugal lost by neglecting the genius of Columbus? His services were offered to them, and declined. Spain undertook a scheme which those nations, though far better skilled in navigation than herself, yet deterred by the magnitude of its dangers, had refused to embark in. She succeeded, and the honor is all her own; and, so bright is its lustre, that it shines still with unclouded rays, amid the gloom which is settling so thick around her, and must continue to shine till time's unceasing footsteps wear creation out.

Of all the vices that degrade mankind, the meanest and most detestable is falsehood. It sears the heart, scathes all its fine feelings, and dries up in it the sources of honorable action. It fills our gaols with felons, and scourges society with cheating, treachery, fraud, and all sorts of crime. Can nations lie and cheat—aye, but call it not so. Frederick the great pledged himself by all that could make a treaty solemn and binding, to observe with good faith the *pragmatic sanction*, by which Maria Theresa ascended the throne of Austria. Yet, touched by none of those tender sympathies which clustered round that young queen, led on by his own grasping ambition, and tempted by her weakness, he invaded her defenceless territories. The horrible calamities of the seven years war, during which the nations of Europe combined against him, and Prussia was over-run, her towns pillaged, her fields devastated, and her people slain, were the fearful consequences of his gross want of faith. This vice has come to blot our escutcheon—till now unsullied. The doctrine of repudiation, promulgated in one of our sister states, has nipped with blight and mildew the laurels of our national honor. Our citizens must hang their heads with shame, and our name be a by-word and reproach among nations until this stain is wiped out. It is vain to say that we have been cheated by our agents; the fact that they were our own agents, selected by ourselves, estops the plea. Justice demands the punishment of the guilty agents, not of the innocent suffer-

ers by the fraud. Thanks to heaven! Virginia is free from this stain—She weeps over the soiled banner of her sister as it trails in the dust, but rejoices in her own bright honor. Sons of Virginia! keep that honor bright, let not blot nor stain tarnish her fair name. Contrast the refusal of Mississippi to pay her debt with the recent voluntary loan of the citizens of Holland to their King—and how does the youthful republic suffer by the contrast. Has freedom polluted the hearts of her sons? No, no!—Freedom refines and ennobles the heart of man. But I greatly fear that a misapprehension of democratic power, has laid the foundation of this evil disgrace. The fatal error is abroad that the majority of to-day is omnipotent, and must not be ruled by that of yesterday. Farewell to freedom, to justice, to all our glory, if this doctrine prevail! The majority of mere numbers has no inherent right to rule even in the absence of established governments, for then the right to rule is a question of power, and all history teaches us that the greatest power does not always reside with the greatest number, but is often transferred by wealth, talents, or skill, to the minority: while in all established governments the fundamental law must be supreme, and rule over both the majority and minority. Admit the doctrine that the majority is omnipotent and uncontrollable, and democracy is only the despotism of many masters, and may bring as grinding oppression as the tyranny of an autocrat. Under republican institutions especially, where the tendency is ever strongest to the domination of the majority, is it necessary to cling to the doctrine that the law alone is supreme. This is the sheet anchor of our hopes, the basis of rational freedom, the best security for chartered rights, for peace and order, and all that is solid and good in society; without it the social compact is abrogated—power is the only test of right—and tyranny reigns, whatever be the form of the government.

Without pretending to decide whether man has any innate sense of good and evil, teaching him by intuition the difference between right and wrong, it will, I think, be admitted on all hands, that there are certain great fundamental truths which the wants of every society lead it to adopt;—these form the basis of international law. And, however conventional our notions of justice may be, the honor of a nation demands a strict compliance with the rules of that law; any infraction of them, only being the more dishonorable from the fact, that there is no tribunal to enforce its precepts, and the appeal must consequently ever be to violence and the sword—letting slip the dogs of war to mangle the peace of society. Yet is there a remote sanction of the great principles of national equity in this—that a nation rarely reaps any fruits of injustice, at all commensurate with its evils. The God of battles having announced these moral truths amid thunders and shakings of the earth, does not allow them to be violated with impunity; and, when the appeal is made to him, rarely fails to visit with heavy retribution, flagrant and wilful infractions of them. The awful calamities which befel the nations that participated in the division of Poland, is a signal instance of the vengeance with which the All-Wise Disposer of human events punishes violations of national law. While Prussia, Austria and Russia were busily engaged in securing the spoils of that most flagitious act of injustice, the storm of the French revolution was brewing around them. They lost the lucky moment to arrest its dangers, and, when too late to be prevented, it burst upon them with irresistible and overwhelming ru-

in. Prussia, the most greedy of the three, was the greatest sufferer—the battle of Jena, the peace of Tilsit, and years of bondage were her punishment. Austria, in the devastation of her fields, the loss of her territory, and the surrender of her capitol, and Russia in the defeat of her armies, the slaughter of her people, and the conflagration of Moscow, both reaped the penalty of their injustice. Dreadful as were the calamities which Napoleon inflicted on these nations, we cannot contemplate them as the punishment of their crimes, without a feeling of grateful pleasure at the thought, that there is a mighty arm which rules over the destiny of man, and punishes with terrible vengeance the violations of national law.

The loveliest virtue that adorns the character of man is charity—the noblest ornament of individual, the brightest wreath of national honor. To succour poverty, to relieve want, to pluck the thorn from woe, to bear up the tottering steps of decrepitude, to open the world of mind where nature has closed its avenues, and to pour the light of hope into regions of despair, are the monuments of its work—monuments, compared with which, the pyramids of the Pharaohs, or the grandest structures of Grecian and Roman architecture, are insignificant and contemptible. The ancients erected their baths, their aqueducts, their porticos, their temples, their theatres and their palaces, on a scale of magnificent grandeur, and decorated them with all the beauties of sculpture and art. But we look in vain among them for their charitable institutions—their hospitals for the afflicted, and their asylums for the destitute. The solid masonry and wide-mouthed cannon of our forts, or our gallant navy bearing the star-spangled banner in triumph on every sea, and snatching victory from the paws of the British lion, are proud subjects of national gratulation; but they remind us of the injustice and oppression of man, of the slaughter and havoc of war, and are not themes of as sweet contemplation, as the humble works of philanthropic charity, which bind up the wounds of misfortune, and dry the weeping eyes of woe. Shame to that government which can leave charity to freeze in the cold bosom of individual exertion, instead of sheltering her under its own broad wings, or which lets her halt on the feeble and crippled support of private effort, instead of bearing her aloft in the strong arms of national protection.

We come to the last subject to which I shall call your attention—the dissemination of knowledge among the people, and I shall dismiss it with a very few remarks, not from any under-valuation of its importance—far from it. But because the length of this address, already extended too far, warns me that I may tax your patience too long. The nation which neglects the education of its citizens cannot fill the measure of national honor, however the wisdom of its laws and the equity of its conduct may entitle it to respect, or lead it to prosperity. Neither are the order and peace, the prosperity and liberty of a nation safe, unless they rest on the firm foundation of the virtue and intelligence of the people. Men must know their rights before they can maintain them; and “how shall they know except they be taught?” and who shall teach them but the nation? Can one man unfold the massive doors that shut in the treasures of knowledge, or roll back the clouds of ignorance and error which rest upon the people? There is need of much wisdom in the selection of a system of popular education. Want of time forbids me to enlarge on the merits and faults of those which have been tried. I

can only say that any system which looks merely to intellectual improvement, which seeks only the cultivation of the capacities of the mind, without refining the feelings of the heart, is sadly defective. It may bear the fruit of knowledge, but it may be that fruit whose mortal taste is the source of evil; to bring forth good fruit, the tree of knowledge must be planted in the heart, and moral culture must prune its rankness, till round its roots, and water its dry places with the dews of heaven.

My work is done. Young men, the honor of the nation will soon be confided to your hands. Prepare yourselves to keep it. Build high your vigil-fires, feed them well with the oil of virtue and religion, watch them with sleepless vigilance, and tend them with untiring toil, that when the time comes for you to pass your ward to those who shall succeed you, the jewel of American honor may go from your hands as pure and unsullied, as it came to us from the Father of his country.

PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE SOCIETY OF ALUMNI,
AT ITS SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING.

University of Va., July 3, 1844.

According to the order of adjournment at its last meeting, the Society of Alumni of the University of Virginia, met this day in the eastern hall of the Rotunda. Many members from the surrounding country, and some from distant parts of the State were present, and reported themselves. In the absence of the President, the 1st Vice President, FRANKLIN MINOR, Esq., took the chair, and called the Society to order.

The proceedings of the last meeting of the Society were read by the recording Secretary, and having been approved, were signed by the presiding officer.

TH. WOOD, Esq., Treasurer of the Society, made his annual report, relative to the condition of the finances of the Society, which was approved and received.

On motion of Mr. JNO. B. MINOR, Resolved, that the Treasurer of the Society be, and he is hereby instructed to lend the funds of the Society on good, and safe security, to collect the interest semi-annually, and lend that on like terms.

The term of office for which the officers of the Society had been elected expiring with the present meeting—

On motion of Mr. P. CARR, Resolved, that the Society do now proceed to the election of officers for the next two years. The election of President being first in order :

Mr. TRUEHEART nominated R. C. STANARD, of *Richmond City*.
 Mr. JNO. B. MINOR nominated WM. DANIEL, of *Lynchburg, Va.*
 Mr. G. W. CARR nominated R. M. T. HUNTER, of *Essex co., Va.*
 And on balloting, Mr. HUNTER was found duly elected.

CH. L. MOSBY, Esq., of *Lynchburg, Va.*, was nominated, and elected 1st Vice President, and Jno. B. MINOR, Esq., of *Albemarle co., Va.*, 2d Vice President of the Society.

On nominations severally made, P. CARR, Esq. was re-elected recording Secretary, and TH. WOOD, Esq., of *Albemarle*, Treasurer of the Society.

Mr. J. H. GILMER offered a resolution, with a view to the alteration of the mode of nomination, and election of members, which, after amendment and debate had thereupon, was, upon motion of Mr. TH. WOOD, referred to a committee of three with instructions to report during the next sitting of the Society.

And the chair appointed the following gentlemen as the committee under the foregoing resolution, viz: Professors GEO. TUCKER, and J. L. CABELL, and TH. WOOD, Esq.

On motion of Mr. P. CARR, Resolved, that the Society will at this time proceed to the nomination of candidates for the offices of Orator, and Alternate Orator for the next annual meeting, postponing the election of the same to the session of the Society to be held to-morrow. And the following gentlemen were accordingly placed in nomination:

WM. DANIEL, Esq., of *Lynchburg, Va.*

WM. BALLARD PRESTON, Esq., of *Montgomery co., Va.*

R. C. STANARD, of *Richmond City*, and

Z. COLLINS LEE, of *Baltimore*.

There being no other business before the Society at this session, on motion of Mr. WOOD, the Society adjourned to meet to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock.

THURSDAY, JULY 4TH, 1844.

The Society met, according to adjournment, F. G. RUFFIN, Esq., of Alb. Co., the 2d Vice President, in the chair.

TH. WOOD, Esq., in the absence of the chairman of the committee, reported, that the committee to which was referred on yesterday, the subject of the alteration in the mode of nomination, and election of members, had considered the same, and deemed it inexpedient to report any alteration therein, and the committee were, on motion, discharged from the further consideration of the subject.

The committee on nominations, through Mr. JNO. B. MINOR, their chairman, reported the names of various gentlemen for membership, who, having graduated in one or more of the Schools of the University, and intending to leave the institution finally, were upon nomination, elected members of the Society of Alumni. The committee, through their chairman, further made report, that they had endeavored to ascertain the names of all gentlemen qualified for membership, and if any had been omitted, it had arisen, not from negligence, but from the difficulty of discovering from amongst so many, those gentlemen who would not return to the University.

The Society proceeded to the business next in order, viz: the election of an Orator, and an Alternate Orator, from the nominations already made. And on balloting, WM. DANIEL, Esq., of *Lynchburg, Va.*, was found duly elected Orator, and WM. BALLARD PRESTON, Esq., of *Montgomery co., Va.*, Alternate Orator for the next annual meeting of the Society.

On motion of Mr. J. F. MONTGOMERY, Resolved, that the Society do now adjourn, to meet again this afternoon at 5 o'clock.

The Society then repaired to the Hall of the Rotunda, to witness the exercises incident to the termination of the annual session of the University.

At their close, FRANKLIN MINOR, Esq., who had been elected Alternate Orator at the last annual meeting of the Society, delivered before the Society, and in presence of the Visitors of the University, its Faculty, and Students, and a large and intelligent auditory, an able, eloquent and instructive discourse upon National and Individual Honor, their connexion and mutual dependence.

EVENING SESSION.

The Society resumed its session according to the order of adjournment, F. G. RUFFIN, Esq., 2d Vice President, in the chair—

On motion of Mr. FRANKLIN MINOR, Resolved, that hereafter, any person nominated for membership, shall be admitted a member of the Society, unless a majority of the members present shall vote in the negative.

On motion of Mr. FRANKLIN MINOR, Resolved, that a committee of three be appointed to wait on the Hon. WM. C. RIVES, one of the honorary members of the Society, and request him to deliver an address before the Society at its next annual meeting—

And the Chair appointed the following gentlemen, as the committee under the resolution just adopted, viz: Messrs. F. MINOR, J. H. GILMER, and WM. W. MINOR.

The committee, after consultation, reported that Mr. R. had manifested a deep interest in the welfare and continued prosperity of the Society, and had responded to the resolution of the Society, by authorizing them to inform that body, that he would either accede to their wishes himself, or obtain as his substitute, some other gentleman, whose services would be equally acceptable.

On motion of Mr. G. W. RANDOLPH, Resolved, that a committee of three be appointed, with instructions to report at the next annual meeting of the Society, any amendment of the Constitution, in regard to the nomination and election of members, which they may deem advisable. And the chair appointed the following gentlemen, as the committee under the foregoing resolution, viz: Messrs. G. W. RANDOLPH, WM. B. ROGERS, and J. H. GILMER

On motion of Professor J. L. CABELL, Resolved, that FRANKLIN MINOR, Esq., be requested by the Secretary of the Society to furnish a copy of his Oration for publication.

On motion of Professor J. L. CABELL, Resolved, that the Secretary cause the proceedings of this meeting of the Society to be published in connexion with Mr. MINOR's Oration in the form of an appendix to the same, and that he also request the Richmond and Washington papers to publish a condensed report of the proceedings of this meeting.

On motion of Mr. J. B. MINOR, Resolved, that the Secretary of the Society cause as many copies of Mr. M.'s Oration, and the accompanying proceedings to be published, as he may deem expedient, and that he be authorized to draw upon the Treasurer for any amount necessary to defray the expense of publication.

On motion of Mr. J. B. MINOR, Resolved, that when the Society adjourns, it will adjourn to meet at the University on the 3d day of July, 1845.

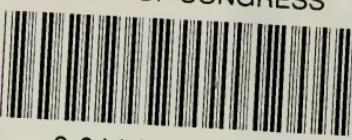
And the Society adjourned accordingly.

F. G. RUFFIN, 2d V. P.

P. CARR, Sec'y.



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